

LENT DEVOTION

Austin Christian Fellowship of India (ACFI)

March 6th 2019

By: Ps. Dr. Samuel Madavaraj

"Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breast plate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition, to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all flaming arrows of the evil one. Take up the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God" (Ephesians 6:13--17).

This familiar verse reminds us of the armor one needs to put on and take up on a daily basis in order to stand firm and stand our ground in our lives. One needs to have the "full armor" at the same time and all the time. One cannot afford to miss at the cost of the other or cannot be used at the convenience of the believer or at times of need as the situation demands. We need all of them at all the time. The armor is not only a privilege but also an obligation vested on every Christian.

Sometimes, the meaning and the significance of the "armor of God" is not fully understood and thus it results in the improper use of the same. The "breast plate of righteousness" is one of those. "Breast plate" is one of the most important one as it protects the essential portion of one's body - the heart, lungs, liver, etc., which helps the entire body to function properly. So does the "Helmet of Salvation too!" What is righteousness and what does it do? What is the difference between the "Righteousness" of a Christian and that of an unbeliever? Is "righteousness" a learned behavior or cultural norm? Because the unbelievers seem to be more righteous than those who claim themselves to be Christians! These are some of the questions that one wrestles with pertaining to "Righteousness."

During this Lent Season let us concentrate and meditate on the word "Righteousness" based on the Biblical teaching. At the outset, simply put, "Righteousness" belongs to God. It is His character and that is what He is. It signifies His moral purity. Pharaoh was the first one (in the Bible) to acknowledge that "God is righteous" and said, "I have sinned this time; The Lord is the righteous one" (Exodus 9:27). Later on Moses reminded the people of Israel that "Righteous and upright is He" (Deuteronomy 32:4) while talking about the character of God. Friends, "the Lord is righteous, He loves justice" (Psalm 11:7). The prophet Isaiah declared God is the "Righteous One" (Isaiah 24:16) and when compared to His moral purity and standard, the so called righteousness of people is like "filthy rags" that is useless and stinky. Jesus is also referred to as the "Righteous One" (Acts 3:14; 7:52). John declares that we have an advocate with the Father, "Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1)

Man's righteousness cannot be useful and will not save the person when worn as a breast plate. It cannot help the person to stand firm and withstand the storms of life. Only the "Righteousness of God" is able to help us to get through the odds - problems, sufferings, sin, death and every pain - in life. You and I and in fact, everyone needs God's "Righteousness" as the breast plate. Do you have it? The good news is you can have it because of the Death, burial, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Praise and thank God for the same.